

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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KYODAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in Japan, which ended Saturday, October 29th, will likely be remembered as a turning point in Kyodan history. A Confession of Faith was adopted by "almost unanimous" vote. Observers are agreed that in this an historical step was taken.

Confession of Faith

The decision adopting the Confession of Faith came as the climax of a four year period of specific preparation and study, and a longer history of discussion and concern.

When the Kyodan was formed, June 24, 1941, it was a polyglot group of more than thirty evangelical Protestant communions, including at least eleven different blocks of denominational loyalty. Following the war a number of groups pulled out, but the majority, representing at that time about 80% of the Protestant Christians in Japan stayed in determined to seek, under the guidance of God, a new unity which could transcend denominational barriers.

Part of the struggle to become a true "church" and not just a federation of churches, has been the search for a confession of faith "appropriate to the ecumenical Protestant Church."

The earliest regulations of the Kyodan stated: "accepting the Old and New Testaments as its basic Scriptures, being founded on the Apostle's Creed, and other confessions of Faith..."

In 1948, "founded on the Apostles Creed..." was changed to "confessing the Apostles Creed..."

In 1950 a "Committee on the Confession of Faith" was appointed. This committee reported to the next biennial general assembly and proposed a preface to the Apostle's Creed which would be used, together with that Creed, as the "Confession of Faith."

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Decision was postponed until this, the next assembly. During the interval churches and special district(kyoku) committees were to study this statement and make suggestions to the committee, on the basis of which it would make a new report to the assembly.

At this assembly that committee recommended and the assembly accepted the following statement, which represents no essential change from the text of two years previously:

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH OF THE NIPPON KIRISUTO KYODAN

We believe and confess:

The Old and New Testaments, inspired of God testify to Christ, reveal the truth of the Gospel, and are the sole canon that the Church should depend upon. Thus the Holy Bible, being the Word of God, by the Holy Spirit gives us perfect knowledge of God and Salvation; and is the unerring standard of faith and life.

The One God, revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and testified to in the Holy Scripture, being Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the triune God. The Son, who became man for the salvation of us sinners, was crucified and made our redemption by offering Himself to God as the perfect sacrifice once for all.

By His grace God chooses us and justifies us, forgiving our sins only through faith in Christ. In this unchangeable grace the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work by sanctifying us and making us bear the fruits of righteousness.

The Church is the Body of Christ the Lord, and is the congregation of those who are called by grace. The Church maintains public worship, preaches the Gospel aright, administers the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and being diligent in works of love, waits for the coming again of the Lord.

Thus believing, we join the saints of ages to confess the Apostles' Creed.

(Here the Apostles' Creed follows.)

Principles for Living

The "Principles for Living" (a sort of "Church Covenant") were also adopted as originally proposed with the single addition of the word "labor" at the conclusion of Point 2. This came as the suggestion of Dr. Kagawa.

THE PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING OF THE NIPPON KRISUTO KYODAN

By the grace of God, having been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and admitted to the Church, which is the Body of the Lord, we put aside all iniquities and superstitions, maintain with one another the close fellowship of brothers and sisters in the Lord, pray always for the manifestation of the glory of God, and strive to do the following things:

1. We will keep the order of the Church, obey its teachings and discipline, emphasize the importance of Lord's Day worship, prayer services and other meetings, observe the Holy Communion, be diligent in evangelism, and labour for the support and development of the Church by giving our time, treasures and talents.
2. Studying the Scripture daily and praying always, we will maintain a life of piety, purity, temperance, and labor.
3. We will endeavour to observe family worship, maintain harmony in the home, lead members of the family into the faith and serve God with the whole house.
4. Respecting one another's personality, loving our neighbours and labouring for the welfare of society, we will strive for the realization of the love and justice of Christ throughout the world.
5. Following the will of God, we will make every effort for the uplift of the morality of the state, the realization of international justice and the attainment of world peace.

May God have mercy upon us, and enable us to accomplish this purpose.

Amen

New Leadership

For the first time in eight years the Kyodan has changed its top leadership. Replacing Rev. Michio Kozaki as Moderator is Rev. Takeshi Muto. And succeeding Rev. Kozo Kashiwai as Vice-Moderator is Rev. Gosaku Okada. The new Recording Secretary is Rev. Takihiko Yamakita.

Rev. Takeshi Muto

Rev. Muto, a former Methodist, is pastor of the Hongo Chuo Church in Tokyo. He studied at Aoyama Gakuin Theological Department, graduating there in 1931, following which he studied three years at Tokyo University in the field of Literature and Aesthetics. He then went to America where he took an M.A. in the field of Philosophy at Northwestern University.

During the war he was president of Kassui Women's College in Nagasaki. After the war he came to his present pastorate in Tokyo.

In addition to other responsibilities he has served as Chairman of the Tokyo District Evangelism Committee and the Christian Weekly Editorial Committee. He has also served on the Committee on Confession of Faith and the Tokyo District Executive Committee.

In 1952, he was delegate to the Commission on Faith and Order meeting in Amsterdam.

Rev. Gosaku Okada

The new Vice-moderator, Rev. Okada, is pastor of the Denenchofu Church in Tokyo and Professor at Japan Biblical Seminary, where he teaches Church History, History of Christian Doctrine and English.

Rev. Okada also graduated from Aoyama Gakuin Theological Department in 1930, before it was merged to form Tokyo Theological Seminary. In 1931 he went to America where he took the Master of Theology degree at Princeton Seminary and an M.A. in Education from New York University.

He has served as a member of the Kyodan Executive Board, the Ministerial Ordination Committee, and the Council of Cooperation.

In addition to other activities he has translated a number of books including Brunner's Theology of Crisis and Zohm's Church History.

Rev. Takihiro Yamakita

The New Recording Secretary, Rev. Yamakita, is pastor of the Misakicho Church in Tokyo, a church related to the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. He graduated from the Law Department of Keio University and Kanto Gakuin Theological Seminary. He has served as Chairman of the Kyodan Education Committee and as a member of the NCC Department of Church School Activities Curriculum Committee and Board of Trustees.

Lay Participation Strengthened

The Kyodan Executive Committee elected at this general assembly is composed of fourteen pastors and thirteen laymen. This represents a much larger proportion of laymen over the previous division of eighteen pastors and nine laymen.

According to the constitution the Kyodan General Assembly is composed of 185 ministers and 185 laymen, plus thirty additional persons recommended by the moderator. The composition of the executive Committee is not so dictated.

New Budget

In the new budget adopted by the general assembly the percentages of income from various sources remained about the same. This means that the amounts of money raised within the country have kept pace well with the annual increases in budget, as is shown below:

	<u>1955</u>	<u>1954</u>
Total budget	¥114,045,000	¥96,985,000
Offerings, etc.	14,850,000	13,150,000
I.B.C. funds	49,065,000	41,680,000
Publications, etc.	38,417,000	32,007,000
Other	11,713,000	10,148,000

Evangelism Research Planned

Celebration

The general assembly also decided to set up a "Research Institute on Evangelism and Theology".

This organization will make a study of how the Gospel can be related to all areas of Japanese life so as to be really effectively preached. By consideration of economic, social, religious, and other characteristics of the country in relation to the Bible it is hoped that real help can be given to the pastor in preaching the Gospel in terms charged with meaning to the modern Japanese whether he is a coal-miner or a bank president.

Toward this end a preparatory committee will be set up soon to consider matters of budget, place and personnel.

